

this amendment and talk about it, but to speak on an amendment of another Member of the Senate, an amendment that also focuses on the avian flu.

Our country faces threats, some of which we know and some of which we don't know today. One real threat is the threat of pandemic bird flu. The President of the United States was ahead of the curve on this with a proposal to the Congress of over \$7 billion for advanced development of vaccines, for the preparation the country needs to go through, and for the stockpiles of antivirals and countermeasures.

The fact is that Congress has responded to his request. This year the budget resolution highlights the fact that the President's request of \$2.3 billion of taxpayers' money is in this budget resolution.

My colleague from North Dakota, for whom I have a tremendous amount of respect and who has helped, along with Senator GREGG, to move this budget resolution through this body, has asked we increase that amount by \$5 billion. If for 1 minute I thought \$5 billion would make America safer, I would be on the floor as a cosponsor of that amendment. But the reality is, we are at a point where we are absorbing all the money we can, given where we are in this process.

I just left a hearing with the Secretary of Health and Human Services. My direct question to him was: The President's budget asked for \$2.3 billion. Is that sufficient for 2007?

He looked at me and said: Senator, where we are in the development of vaccines, where we are in our need for stockpiles, that amount fulfills everything we can do in preparation.

So I urge my colleagues not to support the amendment for an additional \$5 billion of taxpayers' money to potentially go into a black hole. I remind my colleagues that the way this is funded is to raise taxes on the American people. We have used tax loopholes for corporations to fund many items suggested in amendments on this floor. The fact is, once again, the American people realize this is a covert way of raising taxes on them.

My amendment does something very simple. It creates a reserve fund. It has been described as hollow because it has no money. I believe the American people demand that we bring fiscal responsibility to this institution, to the Congress of the United States. I don't want to tie the hands of individuals within the agencies if they see a need for something, but the creation of this reserve fund allows them to do it in a budget-neutral way.

I believe this will be overwhelmingly supported because, in fact, it doesn't spend any new money, but it provides the flexibility and authority to those who are charged with addressing this threat.

The amendment establishes a reserve fund, and that can help to rebuild our domestic vaccine industry, support advanced development and acquisition of

needed drugs and vaccines, strengthen the public health infrastructure, and increase surveillance and outbreak containment.

We are at a point in this Congress where we have the opportunity to reauthorize the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act, and we are considering legislation on advanced development of vaccines and countermeasures against chemical, biological, or radiological and natural threats. There are many issues that we have to decide exactly how we are going to handle. But to throw money at them is, in fact, not the answer today.

Those who are charged with the responsibility of making sure this country is prepared, in fact, have sufficient funding today. I urge my colleagues to vote against the Conrad amendment, to vote for the Burr amendment, and to make sure this administration is able to carry out what has been a well-planned preparation for a known threat to this country and, I might add, to the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask that 10 minutes of the chairman's time be yielded to me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the chairman very much. We have been trying to distribute time so we can most efficiently use time on the floor. I yield 3½ minutes to the Senator from Colorado.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 3081

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from North Dakota. I call up amendment No. 3081 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the pending amendment is set aside. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Colorado [Mr. SALAZAR], for himself, Mr. BINGAMAN, and Mr. LEAHY, proposes an amendment numbered 3081.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To fully fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. Adds \$152 million to Function 800 (General Government) for PILT. Paid for by closing \$152 million in corporate tax loopholes)

On page 3, line 13, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 4, line 1, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 4, line 13, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 5, line 4, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 25, line 24, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 25, line 25, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 53, line 1, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

On page 53, line 2, increase the amount by \$152,000,000.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, this amendment aims to fully fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program for our country. It is an issue of vital importance to rural America. I am pleased to be joined in this effort today by Senator BINGAMAN and Senator LEAHY who are cosponsors of this amendment.

As I have said often on this floor before, rural America continues to wither on the vine. I will continue to come to this floor and sound the alarm of the plight of rural America because I am absolutely certain it doesn't have to be this way.

The heartland of this country is a vast reservoir of American potential and strength, and the values, common sense, perseverance, and work ethic embodied in the 50 million people who live in rural America are national treasures in and of themselves.

These people are also the stewards of our many public lands, and they deserve support in that effort. That is where PILT comes in. Created in 1976, PILT compensates local government for the presence of nontaxable Federal lands within their boundaries, as well as the associated costs of providing work, such as road work and law enforcement, to visitors on those lands.

Over the years, inflation has taken its toll. Repeatedly underfunding the PILT Program has also sent precisely the wrong message to rural America. Full PILT funding for fiscal year 2007 will likely be close to \$350 million, but the President's budget for PILT was reduced by \$38 million, or 16 percent, from where it was last year.

This is not just about my State of Colorado where some counties are owned by the Federal Government to the extent of 95 percent; it is about governments in at least 49 of our States where there are significant public land holdings within those States.

This amendment is fully offset by tax loophole closures. Some colleagues have approached me about alternatives, and I will work with them to explore other ideas in terms of funding alternatives.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this modest, commonsense amendment. When I travel through the rural counties of Colorado, I hear the voices of proud, hard-working rural Americans who feel neglected by Washington. Let's take an opportunity in a very small way in this budget resolution to send a different signal that we in Washington care about rural America.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Colorado. This is an important amendment, certainly an important amendment to Western